IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 9 and 11 without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter and amend the claims as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1.      (Currently Amended)   An image processing method implemented by a computer for ~~search for an original data file corresponding to~~ selectively storing an input image in a database, comprising the steps of:

(a)   acquiring first search information associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user;

(b)   acquiring feature data contained in the input image as second search information; [[and]]

(c)   searching for an ~~original data~~ image file corresponding to the input image in the database by using the first and second search information;

(d)   converting the input image into vector data and storing the vector data in the database, in a case where the image file corresponding to the input image is not found in said step (c); and

(e)   declining to store the input image data into the database, in a case that the image file corresponding to the input image is found in said step (c).

2.      (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

[[(d)]] (f)   registering the first search information as an index for searching for the ~~original data~~ image file in an index file.

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3.      (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein the first search information comprises a keyword for ~~search~~ searching using the input image.

4.      (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein the first search information comprises a data size of the ~~original data file~~ image file.

5.      (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein the first search information comprises date information of the ~~original data file~~ image file.

6.      (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein the second search information comprises information associated with a storage location of the ~~original data file~~ image file which is extracted on the basis of pointer information in the input image.

7.      (Original)   The method according to claim 1, wherein the second search information comprises a character code of a character recognition result which is obtained by performing a character recognition process with respect to a character region in the input image.

8.      (Original)   The method according to claim 1, wherein the second search information comprises feature data of each block obtained by region segmentation of the input image.

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9.      (Cancelled).


10.     (Currently Amended)    The method according to claim [[9]] 1,
further comprising the step of:

(f) converting the input image, which has been converted into the vector
data, into data in a format which can be handled by application software.


11.     (Cancelled).


12.     (Currently Amended)    The method according to claim 10, further
comprising the step of:

[[(h)]] (g) registering the first search information, in an index file, as an
index for searching for an image represented by the vector data stored in [[a]] the database
in the step [[(c)]] (d).


13.     (Currently Amended)    The method according to claim 1, further
comprising the step of:

[[(i)]] (f) outputting the ~~searched original data~~ image file, wherein pointer
information is added to the ~~output original data~~ image file.


14.     (Currently Amended)    The method according to claim 13, wherein
the pointer information is added as a digital watermark to the ~~original data~~ image file.


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15.    (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein in the step (c), the ~~original data~~ image file is searched for by using at least one of keyword search, full-text search, and layout search.

16.    (Currently Amended)   An image processing system which ~~searches for an original data~~ selectively stores an image file corresponding to an input image, comprising:

~~means for acquiring~~ an input unit constructed to input first search information associated with the input image ~~on the basis of information input by a user~~;

~~means for acquiring~~ a unit constructed to acquire feature data contained in the input image as second search information; [[and]]

~~means for searching~~ a search unit constructed to search for an ~~original data~~ image file corresponding to the input image in a database by using the first and second search information;

a unit constructed to convert the input image into vector data and to store the vector data in the database, in a case where no image file corresponding to the input image is found by said search unit, and

a unit constructed to decline storing the input image data into the database, in a case that the image file corresponding to the input image file is found by said search unit.

17.    (Currently Amended)   A computer executable program stored on a computer-readable medium for ~~search for an original data~~ selectively storing an image file corresponding to an input image, comprising:

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code for acquiring first search information associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user;

code for acquiring feature data contained in the input image as second search information; [[and]]

code for searching for an ~~original data~~ image file corresponding to the input image in a database by using the first and second search information;

code for converting the input image into vector data and storing the vector data in the database, in a case where the image file corresponding to the input image is not found; and

code for declining to store the input image data into the database, in a case that the image file corresponding to the input image is found.

18.     (Currently Amended)   A computer-readable medium having a computer executable program stored thereon for ~~search for an original data~~ selectively storing an image file corresponding to an input image, the program comprising:

code for acquiring first search information associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user;

code for acquiring feature data contained in the input image as second search information; [[and]]

code for searching for an ~~original data~~ image file corresponding to the input image in a database by using the first and second search information;

code for converting the input image into vector data and storing the vector data in the database, in a case where the image file corresponding to the input image is not found; and

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code for declining to store the input image data into the database, in a case that the image file corresponding to the input image is found.